How Lisa Loved the King

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George Eliot

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WITH NEW ILLUSTRATIONS FROM ORIGINAL DESIGNS

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Six hundred years ago, in Dante's time,
Before his cheek was furrowed by deep rhyme;
When Europe, fed afresh from Eastern story,
Was like a garden tangled with the glory
Of flowers hand–planted and of flowers air–sown,
Climbing and trailing, budding and full–blown,
Where purple bells are tossed amid pink stars,
And springing blades, green troops in innocent wars,
Crowd every shady spot of teeming earth,
Making invisible motion visible birth,—

Six hundred years ago, Palermo town
Kept holiday. A deed of great renown,

A high revenge, had freed it from the yoke
Of hated Frenchmen; and from Calpe's rock
To where the Bosporus caught the earlier sun,
'Twas told that Pedro, King of Aragon,
Was welcomed master of all Sicily,—
A royal knight, supreme as kings should be
In strength and gentleness that make high chivalry.

Spain was the favorite home of knightly grace,
Where generous men rode steeds of generous race;
Both Spanish, yet half Arab; both inspired
By mutual spirit, that each motion fired
With beauteous response, like minstrelsy
Afresh fulfilling fresh expectancy.
So, when Palermo made high festival,
The joy of matrons and of maidens all
Was the mock terror of the tournament,
Where safety, with the glimpse of danger blent,
Took exaltation as from epic song,
Which greatly tells the pains that to great life belong.

And in all eyes King Pedro was the king
Of cavaliers; as in a full–gemmed ring
The largest ruby, or as that bright star
Whose shining shows us where the Hyads are.
His the best genet, and he sat it best;
His weapon, whether tilting or in rest,
Was worthiest watching; and his face, once seen,
Gave to the promise of his royal mien
Such rich fulfilment as the opened eyes
Of a loved sleeper, or the long–watched rise
Of vernal day, whose joy o'er stream and meadow flies.

But of the maiden forms that thick enwreathed
The broad piazza, and sweet witchery breathed,
With innocent faces budding all arow,
From balconies and windows high and low,
Who was it felt the deep mysterious glow,

The impregnation with supernal fire
Of young ideal love, transformed desire,
Whose passion is but worship of that Best
Taught by the many–mingled creed of each young breast?

'Twas gentle Lisa, of no noble line,
Child of Bernardo, a rich Florentine,
Who from his merchant–city hither came
To trade in drugs; yet kept an honest fame,
And had the virtue not to try and sell
Drugs that had none. He loved his riches well,
But loved them chiefly for his Lisa's sake,
Whom with a father's care he sought to make

The bride of some true honorable man,—
Of Perdicone (so the rumor ran),
Whose birth was higher than his fortunes were,
For still your trader likes a mixture fair
Of blood that hurries to some higher strain
Than reckoning money's loss and money's gain.
And of such mixture good may surely come:
Lord's scions so may learn to cast a sum,
A trader's grandson bear a well–set head,
And have less conscious manners, better bred;
Nor, when he tries to be polite, be rude instead.

'Twas Perdicone's friends made overtures
To good Bernardo; so one dame assures
Her neighbor dame, who notices the youth
Fixing his eyes on Lisa; and, in truth,
Eyes that could see her on this summer day
Might find it hard to turn another way.
She had a pensive beauty, yet not sad;
Rather like minor cadences that glad
The hearts of little birds amid spring boughs:
And oft the trumpet or the joust would rouse
Pulses that gave her cheek a finer glow,
Parting her lips that seemed a mimic bow
By chiselling Love for play in coral wrought,
Then quickened by him with the passionate thought,
The soul that trembled in the lustrous night
Of slow long eyes. Her body was so slight,
It seemed she could have floated in the sky,
And with the angelic choir made symphony;
But in her cheek's rich tinge, and in the dark
Of darkest hair and eyes, she bore a mark
Of kinship to her generous mother–earth,
The fervid land that gives the plumy palm–trees birth.

She saw not Perdicone; her young mind
Dreamed not that any man had ever pined
For such a little simple maid as she:

She had but dreamed how heavenly it would be
To love some hero noble, beauteous, great,
Who would live stories worthy to narrate,
Like Roland, or the warriors of Troy,
The Cid, or Amadis, or that fair boy
Who conquered every thing beneath the sun,
And somehow, some time, died at Babylon
Fighting the Moors. For heroes all were good
And fair as that archangel who withstood
The Evil One, the author of all wrong,—
That Evil One who made the French so strong;
And now the flower of heroes must he be
Who drove those tyrants from dear Sicily,
So that her maids might walk to vespers tranquilly.

Young Lisa saw this hero in the king;
And as wood–lilies that sweet odors bring
Might dream the light that opes their modest eyne
Was lily–odored; and as rites divine,
Round turf–laid altars, or 'neath roofs of stone,
Draw sanctity from out the heart alone
That loves and worships: so the miniature
Perplexed of her soul's world, all virgin pure,
Filled with heroic virtues that bright form,
Raona's royalty, the finished norm
Of horsemanship, the half of chivalry;
For how could generous men avengers be,
Save as God's messengers on coursers fleet?—
These, scouring earth, made Spain with Syria meet
In one self–world where the same right had sway,
And good must grow as grew the blessed day.
No more: great Love his essence had endued
With Pedro's form, and, entering, subdued
The soul of Lisa, fervid and intense,
Proud in its choice of proud obedience
To hardship glorified by perfect reverence.

Sweet Lisa homeward carried that dire guest,
And in her chamber, through the hours of rest,
The darkness was alight for her with sheen
Of arms, and plumed helm; and bright between
Their commoner gloss, like the pure living spring
'Twixt porphyry lips, or living bird's bright wing
'Twixt golden wires, the glances of the king
Flashed on her soul, and waked vibrations there
Of known delights love–mixed to new and rare:
The impalpable dream was turned to breathing flesh,
Chill thought of summer to the warm close mesh
Of sunbeams held between the citron–leaves,
Clothing her life of life. Oh! she believes
That she could be content if he but knew
(Her poor small self could claim no other due)
How Lisa's lowly love had highest reach
Of winged passion, whereto winged speech
Would be scorched remnants left by mounting flame.
Though, had she such lame message, were it blame
To tell what greatness dwelt in her, what rank
She held in loving? Modest maidens shrank
From telling love that fed on selfish hope;
But love, as hopeless as the shattering song,
Wailed for loved beings who have joined the throng
Of mighty dead ones… Nay, but she was weak,
Knew only prayers and ballads, could not speak
With eloquence, save what dumb creatures have,
That with small cries and touches small boons crave.

She watched all day that she might see him pass
With knights and ladies; but she said, "Alas!
Though he should see me, it were all as one
He saw a pigeon sitting on the stone
Of wall or balcony: some colored spot
His eye just sees, his mind regardeth not.
I have no music–touch that could bring nigh
My love to his soul's hearing. I shall die,

And he will never know who Lisa was,—
The trader's child, whose soaring spirit rose
As hedge–born aloe–flowers that rarest years disclose.

"For were I now a fair deep–breasted queen
A–horseback, with blonde hair, and tunic green,
Gold–bordered, like Costanza, I should need
No change within to make me queenly there:
For they the royal–hearted women are
Who nobly love the noblest, yet have grace;
For needy suffering lives in lowliest place,
Carrying a choicer sunlight in their smile,
The heavenliest ray that pitieth the vile.

My love is such, it cannot choose but soar
Up to the highest; yet forevermore,
Though I were happy, throned beside the king,
I should be tender to each little thing
With hurt warm breast, that had no speech to tell
Its inward pang; and I would soothe it well
With tender touch, and with a low soft moan
For company: my dumb love–pang is lone,
Prisoned as topaz–beam within a rough–garbed stone."

So, inward–wailing, Lisa passed her days.
Each night the August moon with changing phase
Looked broader, harder, on her unchanged pain;
Each noon the heat lay heavier again
On her despair, until her body frail
Shrank like the snow that watchers in the vale
See narrowed on the height each summer morn;
While her dark glance burnt larger, more forlorn,
As if the soul within her, all on fire,
Made of her being one swift funeral–pyre.
Father and mother saw with sad dismay
The meaning of their riches melt away;
For without Lisa what would sequins buy?
What wish were left if Lisa were to die?
Through her they cared for summers still to come,
Else they would be as ghosts without a home
In any flesh that could feel glad desire.
They pay the best physicians, never tire
Of seeking what will soothe her, promising
That aught she longed for, though it were a thing
Hard to be come at as the Indian snow,
Or roses that on Alpine summits blow,
It should be hers. She answers with low voice,
She longs for death alone—death is her choice;
Death is the king who never did think scorn,
But rescues every meanest soul to sorrow born.

Yet one day, as they bent above her bed,
And watched her in brief sleep, her drooping head
Turned gently, as the thirsty flowers that feel
Some moist revival through their petals steal;
And little flutterings of her lids and lips
Told of such dreamy joy as sometimes dips
A skyey shadow in the mind's poor pool.
She oped her eyes, and turned their dark gems full
Upon her father, as in utterance dumb
Of some new prayer that in her sleep had come.
"What is it, Lisa?"—"Father, I would see
Minuccio, the great singer; bring him me."
For always, night and day, her unstilled thought,
Wandering all o'er its little world, had sought
How she could reach, by some soft pleading touch,
King Pedro's soul, that she who loved so much,
Dying, might have a place within his mind,—
A little grave which he would sometimes find
And plant some flower on it,—some thought, some memory kind.

Till in her dream she saw Minuccio
Touching his viola, and chanting low
A strain, that, falling on her brokenly,
Seemed blossoms lightly blown from off a tree;
Each burthened with a word that was a scent,—
Raona, Lisa, love, death, tournament;
Then in her dream she said, "He sings of me,
Might be my messenger; ah! now I see
The king is listening"—Then she awoke,
And, missing her dear dream, that new–born longing spoke.
She longed for music: that was natural;
Physicians said it was medicinal;
The humors might be schooled by true consent
Of a fine tenor and fine instrument;
In short, good music, mixed with doctor's stuff,
Apollo with Asklepios—enough!
Minuccio, entreated, gladly came.

(He was a singer of most gentle fame,
A noble, kindly spirit, not elate
That he was famous, but that song was great;
Would sing as finely to this suffering child
As at the court where princes on him smiled.)
Gently he entered and sat down by her,
Asking what sort of strain she would prefer,—
The voice alone, or voice with viol wed;
Then, when she chose the last, he preluded
With magic hand, that summoned from the strings
Aerial spirits, rare yet palpable wings
That fanned the pulses of his listener,
And waked each sleeping sense with blissful stir.
Her cheek already showed a slow, faint blush;
But soon the voice, in pure, full, liquid rush,
Made all the passion, that till now she felt,
Seem but as cooler waters that in warmer melt.

Finished the song, she prayed to be alone
With kind Minuccio; for her faith had grown
To trust him as if missioned like a priest
With some high grace, that, when his singing ceased,
Still made him wiser, more magnanimous,
Than common men who had no genius.
So, laying her small hand within his palm,
She told him how that secret, glorious harm
Of loftiest loving had befallen her;
That death, her only hope, most bitter were,
If, when she died, her love must perish too
As songs unsung, and thoughts unspoken do,
Which else might live within another breast.
She said, "Minuccio, the grave were rest,
If I were sure, that, lying cold and lone,
My love, my best of life, had safely flown
And nestled in the bosom of the king.
See, 'tis a small weak bird, with unfledged wing;
But you will carry it for me secretly,

And bear it to the king; then come to me
And tell me it is safe, and I shall go
Content, knowing that he I love my love doth know."

Then she wept silently; but each large tear
Made pleading music to the inward ear
Of good Minuccio. "Lisa, trust in me,"
He said, and kissed her fingers loyally:
"It is sweet law to me to do your will,
And, ere the sun his round shall thrice fulfil,
I hope to bring you news of such rare skill
As amulets have, that aches in trusting bosoms still."

He needed not to pause and first devise
How he should tell the king; for in nowise
Were such love–message worthily bested
Save in fine verse by music rendered.
He sought a poet–friend, a Siennese,
And "Mico, mine," he said, "full oft to please
Thy whim of sadness I have sung thee strains
To make thee weep in verse: now pay my pains,
And write me a canzon divinely sad,
Sinlessly passionate, and meekly mad
With young despair, speaking a maiden's heart
Of fifteen summers, who would fain depart
From ripening life's new–urgent mystery,—
Love–choice of one too high her love to be,—
But cannot yield her breath till she has poured
Her strength away in this hot–bleeding word,
Telling the secret of her soul to her soul's lord."

Said Mico, "Nay, that thought is poesy,
I need but listen as it sings to me.
Come thou again to–morrow." The third day,
When linked notes had perfected the lay,
Minuccio had his summons to the court,
To make, as he was wont, the moments short
Of ceremonious dinner to the king.

This was the time when he had meant to bring
Melodious message of young Lisa's love;
He waited till the air had ceased to move
To ringing silver, till Falernian wine
Made quickened sense with quietude combine;
And then with passionate descant made each ear incline.

Love, thou didst see me, light as morning's breath,
Roaming a garden in a joyous error,
Laughing at chases vain, a happy child,
Till of thy countenance the alluring terror
In majesty from out the blossoms smiled,
From out their life seeming a beauteous Death
O Love, who so didst choose me for thine own

Taking this little isle to thy great sway,
See now, it is the honor of thy throne
That what thou gavest perish not away,
Nor leave some sweet remembrance to atone
By life that will be for the brief life gone:
Hear, ere the shroud o'er these frail limbs be thrown—
Since every king is vassal unto thee,
My heart's lord needs must listen loyally—
O tell him I am waiting for my Death!

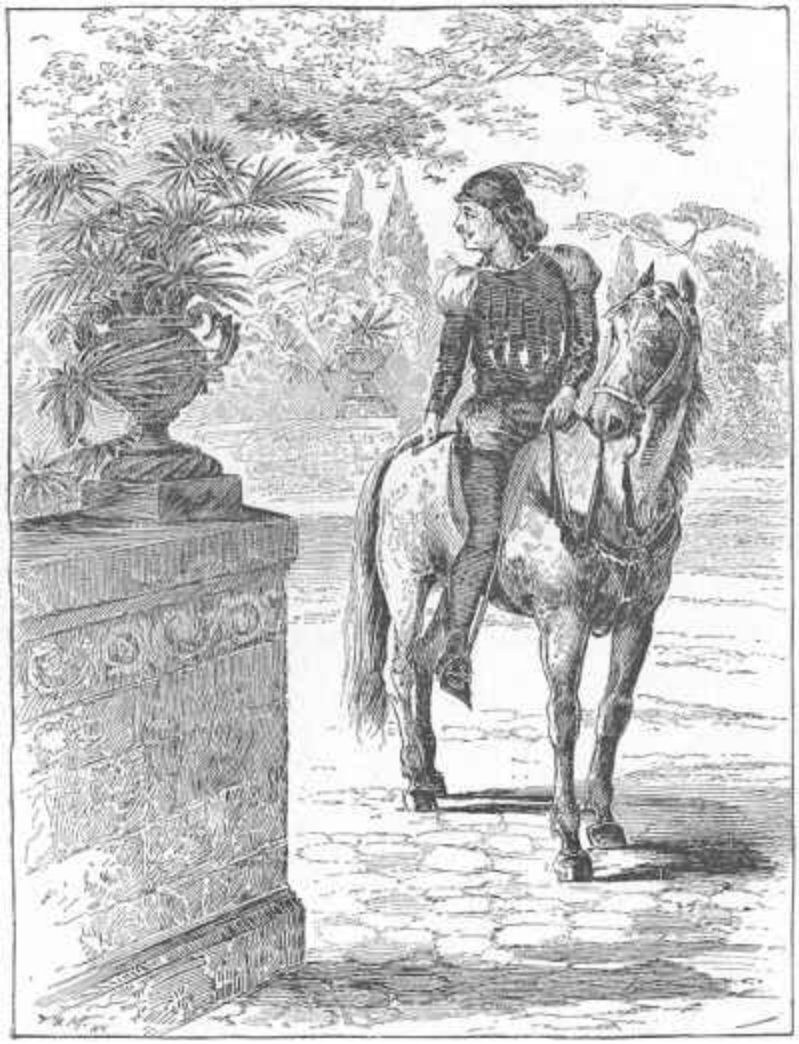
Tell him, for that he hath such royal power
'Twere hard for him to think how small a thing,
How slight a sign, would make a wealthy dower
For one like me, the bride of that pale king
Whose bed is mine at some swift–nearing hour.
Go to my lord, and to his memory bring
That happy birthday of my sorrowing,
When his large glance made meaner gazers glad,
Entering the bannered lists: 'twas then I had
The wound that laid me in the arms of Death.
Tell him, O Love, I am a lowly maid,
No more than any little knot of thyme
That he with careless foot may often tread;
Yet lowest fragrance oft will mount sublime
And cleave to things most high and hallowed,
As doth the fragrance of my life's springtime,
My lowly love, that, soaring, seeks to climb
Within his thought, and make a gentle bliss,
More blissful than if mine, in being his:
So shall I live in him, and rest in Death.

The strain was new. It seemed a pleading cry,
And yet a rounded, perfect melody,
Making grief beauteous as the tear–filled eyes
Of little child at little miseries.
Trembling at first, then swelling as it rose,
Like rising light that broad and broader grows,
It filled the hall, and so possessed the air,

That not one living, breathing soul was there,
Though dullest, slowest, but was quivering
In Music's grasp, and forced to hear her sing.
But most such sweet compulsion took the mood
Of Pedro (tired of doing what he would).
Whether the words which that strange meaning bore
Were but the poet's feigning, or aught more,
Was bounden question, since their aim must be
At some imagined or true royalty.
He called Minuccio, and bade him tell
What poet of the day had writ so well;
For, though they came behind all former rhymes,
The verses were not bad for these poor times.
"Monsignor, they are only three days old,"
Minuccio said; "but it must not be told
How this song grew, save to your royal ear."
Eager, the king withdrew where none was near,
And gave close audience to Minuccio,
Who meetly told that love–tale meet to know.
The king had features pliant to confess
The presence of a manly tenderness,—
Son, father, brother, lover, blent in one,
In fine harmonic exaltation;
The spirit of religious chivalry.
He listened, and Minuccio could see
The tender, generous admiration spread
O'er all his face, and glorify his head
With royalty that would have kept its rank,
Though his brocaded robes to tatters shrank.
He answered without pause, "So sweet a maid,
In Nature's own insignia arrayed,
Though she were come of unmixed trading blood
That sold and bartered ever since the flood,
Would have the self–contained and single worth
Of radiant jewels born in darksome earth.
Raona were a shame to Sicily,
Letting such love and tears unhonored be:

Hasten, Minuccio, tell her that the king
To–day will surely visit her when vespers ring."

Joyful, Minuccio bore the joyous word,
And told at full, while none but Lisa heard,
How each thing had befallen, sang the song,
And, like a patient nurse who would prolong
All means of soothing, dwelt upon each tone,
Each look, with which the mighty Aragon
Marked the high worth his royal heart assigned
To that dear place he held in Lisa's mind.
She listened till the draughts of pure content
Through all her limbs like some new being went—
Life, not recovered, but untried before,
From out the growing world's unmeasured store
Of fuller, better, more divinely mixed.
'Twas glad reverse: she had so firmly fixed
To die, already seemed to fall a veil
Shrouding the inner glow from light of senses pale.



Her parents, wondering, see her half arise;
Wondering, rejoicing, see her long dark eyes
Brimful with clearness, not of 'scaping tears,
But of some light ethereal that enspheres
Their orbs with calm, some vision newly learnt
Where strangest fires erewhile had blindly burnt.
She asked to have her soft white robe and band
And coral ornaments; and with her hand
She gave her long dark locks a backward fall,
Then looked intently in a mirror small,
And feared her face might, perhaps, displease the king:
"In truth," she said, "I am a tiny thing:
I was too bold to tell what could such visit bring."

Meanwhile the king, revolving in his thought
That innocent passion, was more deeply wrought
To chivalrous pity; and at vesper–bell,
With careless mien which hid his purpose well,
Went forth on horseback, and, as if by chance
Passing Bernardo's house, he paused to glance
At the fine garden of this wealthy man,
This Tuscan trader turned Palermitan;
But, presently dismounting, chose to walk
Amid the trellises, in gracious talk
With this same trader, deigning even to ask
If he had yet fulfilled the father's task
Of marrying that daughter, whose young charms
Himself, betwixt the passages of arms,
Noted admiringly. "Monsignor, no,
She is not married: that were little woe,
Since she has counted barely fifteen years;
But all such hopes of late have turned to fears;
She droops and fades, though, for a space quite brief,—
Scarce three hours past,—she finds some strange relief."
The king avised: "'Twere dole to all of us,
The world should lose a maid so beauteous:
Let me now see her; since I am her liege lord,
Her spirits must wage war with death at my strong word."
In such half–serious playfulness, he wends,
With Lisa's father and two chosen friends,
Up to the chamber where she pillowed sits,
Watching the door that opening admits
A presence as much better than her dreams,
As happiness than any longing seems.
The king advanced, and, with a reverent kiss
Upon her hand, said, "Lady, what is this?
You, whose sweet youth should others' solace be,
Pierce all our hearts, languishing piteously.
We pray you, for the love of us, be cheered,
Nor be too reckless of that life, endeared

To us who know your passing worthiness,
And count your blooming life as part of our life's bliss."

Those words, that touch upon her hand from him
Whom her soul worshipped, as far seraphim
Worship the distant glory, brought some shame
Quivering upon her cheek, yet thrilled her frame
With such deep joy she seemed in paradise,
In wondering gladness, and in dumb surprise,
That bliss could be so blissful. Then she spoke:
"Signor, I was too weak to bear the yoke,
The golden yoke, of thoughts too great for me;
That was the ground of my infirmity.
But now I pray your grace to have belief
That I shall soon be well, nor any more cause grief."

The king alone perceived the covert sense
Of all her words, which made one evidence,
With her pure voice and candid loveliness,
That he had lost much honor, honoring less
That message of her passionate distress.
He staid beside her for a little while,
With gentle looks and speech, until a smile
As placid as a ray of early morn
On opening flower–cups o'er her lips was borne
When he had left her, and the tidings spread
Through all the town, how he had visited
The Tuscan trader's daughter, who was sick,
Men said it was a royal deed, and catholic.

And Lisa? She no longer wished for death;
But as a poet, who sweet verses saith
Within his soul, and joys in music there,
Nor seeks another heaven, nor can bear
Disturbing pleasures, so was she content,
Breathing the life of grateful sentiment.
She thought no maid betrothed could be more blest;
For treasure must be valued by the test

Of highest excellence and rarity,
And her dear joy was best as best could be:
There seemed no other crown to her delight,
Now the high loved one saw her love aright.
Thus her soul thriving on that exquisite mood,
Spread like the May–time all its beauteous good
O'er the soft bloom of neck and arms and cheek,
And strengthened the sweet body, once so weak,
Until she rose and walked, and, like a bird
With sweetly rippling throat, she made her spring joys heard.

The king, when he the happy change had seen,
Trusted the ear of Constance, his fair queen,
With Lisa's innocent secret, and conferred
How they should jointly, by their deed and word,
Honor this maiden's love, which, like the prayer
Of loyal hermits, never thought to share
In what it gave. The queen had that chief grace
Of womanhood, a heart that can embrace
All goodness in another woman's form;
And that same day, ere the sun lay too warm
On southern terraces, a messenger
Informed Bernardo that the royal pair
Would straightway visit him, and celebrate
Their gladness at his daughter's happier state,
Which they were fain to see. Soon came the king
On horseback, with his barons, heralding
The advent of the queen in courtly state;
And all, descending at the garden gate,
Streamed with their feathers, velvet, and brocade,
Through the pleached alleys, till they, pausing, made
A lake of splendor 'mid the aloes gray;
When, meekly facing all their proud array,
The white–robed Lisa with her parents stood,
As some white dove before the gorgeous brood
Of dapple–breasted birds born by the Colchian flood.
The king and queen, by gracious looks and speech,

Encourage her, and thus their courtiers teach
How, this fair morning, they may courtliest be,
By making Lisa pass it happily.
And soon the ladies and the barons all
Draw her by turns, as at a festival
Made for her sake, to easy, gay discourse,
And compliment with looks and smiles enforce;
A joyous hum is heard the gardens round;
Soon there is Spanish dancing, and the sound
Of minstrel's song, and autumn fruits are pluckt;
Till mindfully the king and queen conduct
Lisa apart to where a trellised shade
Made pleasant resting. Then King Pedro said,—
"Excellent maiden, that rich gift of love
Your heart hath made us hath a worth above
All royal treasures, nor is fitly met
Save when the grateful memory of deep debt
Lies still behind the outward honors done:
And as a sign that no oblivion
Shall overflood that faithful memory,
We while we live your cavalier will be;
Nor will we ever arm ourselves for fight,
Whether for struggle dire, or brief delight
Of warlike feigning, but we first will take
The colors you ordain, and for your sake
Charge the more bravely where your emblem is:
Nor will we claim from you an added bliss
To our sweet thoughts of you save one sole kiss.
But there still rests the outward honor meet
To mark your worthiness; and we entreat
That you will turn your ear to proffered vows
Of one who loves you, and would be your spouse
We must not wrong yourself and Sicily
By letting all your blooming years pass by
Unmated: you will give the world its due
From beauteous maiden, and become a matron true."

Then Lisa, wrapt in virgin wonderment
At her ambitious love's complete content,
Which left no further good for her to seek
Than love's obedience, said, with accent meek,—
"Monsignor, I know well that were it known
To all the world how high my love had flown,
There would be few who would not deem me mad,
Or say my mind the falsest image had
Of my condition and your loftiness.
But Heaven has seen that for no moment's space
Have I forgotten you to be the king,
Or me myself to be a lowly thing—
A little lark, enamoured of the sky,

That soared to sing, to break its breast, and die.
But, as you better know than I, the heart
In choosing chooseth not its own desert,
But that great merit which attracteth it:
'Tis law, I struggled, but I must submit,
And having seen a worth all worth above,
I loved you, love you, and shall always love.
But that doth mean, my will is ever yours,
Not only when your will my good insures,
But if it wrought me what the world calls harm:
Fire, wounds, would wear from your dear will a charm.
That you will be my knight is full content,
And for that kiss,—I pray, first, for the queen's consent."
Her answer, given with such firm gentleness,
Pleased the queen well, and made her hold no less
Of Lisa's merit than the king had held.
And so, all cloudy threats of grief dispelled,
There was betrothal made that very morn
'Twixt Perdicone, youthful, brave, well–born,
And Lisa whom he loved; she loving well
The lot that from obedience befell.
The queen a rare betrothal ring on each
Bestowed, and other gems, with gracious speech.
And, that no joy might lack, the king, who knew
The youth was poor, gave him rich Ceffalu
And Cataletta,—large and fruitful lands,—
Adding much promise when he joined their hands.
At last he said to Lisa, with an air
Gallant yet noble, "Now we claim our share
From your sweet love, a share which is not small;
For in the sacrament one crumb is all."
Then, taking her small face his hands between,
He kissed her on the brow with kiss serene,—
Fit seal to that pure vision her young soul had seen.

And many witnessed that King Pedro kept
His royal promise. Perdicone stept

To many honors honorably won,
Living with Lisa in true union.
Throughout his life, the king still took delight
To call himself fair Lisa's faithful knight;
And never wore in field or tournament
A scarf or emblem, save by Lisa sent.
Such deeds made subjects loyal in that land;
They joyed that one so worthy to command,
So chivalrous and gentle, had become
The king of Sicily, and filled the room
Of Frenchmen, who abused the Church's trust,
Till, in a righteous vengeance on their lust,
Messina rose, with God, and with the dagger's thrust.

L'ENVOI.

Reader, this story pleased me long ago
In the bright pages of Boccaccio;
And where the author of a good we know,
Let us not fail to pay the grateful thanks we owe.